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# The Myth of Diancecht and Minach

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The following is reprinted from 'Keltria : A Journal of Druidism and Keltic Magick' which is published 4 times a year at the traditional cross-quaters festivals of Samhain, Imbolc, Beltane and Lughnasadh. Subscriptions are available for $6.00 for 1 year. For further information write them at:

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The Myth of Diancecht and Minach

An Interpetation By Iarwain

In the first battle of Moy Tura, Nuada lost his hand. Diancecht fashioned a new one of silver and skillfully joined it to Nuada's arm. One day Diancecht's son Miach took what was left of Nuada's real hand, placed it next to Nuada's arm and uttered an incantation. AFter three days and nights the hand was rejoined and renewed.

Diancecht was furious that his son was a better healer than he. Diancecht struck Miach three times in the head with his sword. Miach was able to heal each wound. On the fourt blow, Diancecht split Miach's head in two, killing him.

From Miach's grave grew 365 herbs, each one with curative powers for one of the 365 nerves in the body. Miach's sister, Airmid, picked these herbs and arranged them according to their curative powers. Diancecht became so enraged that his son rivaled him even after death that he scattered the herbs about, hoplessly confusing them. If Diancecht hadn't done this, man would be immortal.

Several meanings can be found in this myth.

One meaning is that Diancecht represents the order of society. Miach was the young upstart, the rebel. Although good came from his actions, he acted out of his place. IN time he might have replaced Diancecht as the healer of the Gods, but he threatened order by challenging Diancecht and had to be stopped.

From Miach's grave grew 365 herbs to heal the body. From his death, new life, in the form of curative herbs, grew. This represents the idea that life feeds on life. That new life may only come through death of old. In a Native American Myth, it was corn that first grew from the grave of a young man's spirit guide; in the South Pacific, the coconut tree first came from the death of a young woman's spirit lover. This is a common thread in the mythoilogy of many cultures. In most some sort of food is tehs ymbol for new life, in the Diancecht myth, it was the curative powers of the herbs.

I wonder why Diancecht scattered the herbs. After thinking about it, it seems obvious that the herbs represent immortality, something that man was not meant to have. I found a variation of this interpretation in a myth of the Yamana of Tierra del Fuego.

In the Yoalox family, there were two brothers, of which the younger was the smartest and the most talented. One day the elder brother was playing with some stones, striking them together for his amusement. He discovered that when he struck certain stones together they gave a spark. He struck the stones in such a way that a spark ignited some dry down. He then got some kindling and built a fire. He showed his fire to his younger brother explaining that they could keep it burning forever so that people could have fire without trouble. The younger brother disgreed saying that it would be much better if people had to work for it. He then took a stick and scattered the embers. Since that time, people have had to work to make fires.

The Yamana myth ends in a similar manner toi the Diancecht myth. Some boon was created so that people's lives would be made easier, but the results were scattered away. I believe that the lesson of the Yamana myth can also be applied to the Diancecht myth. Diancecht did not scatter the herbs just out of anger. The curative powers of the herbs could not be given to man, but must be worked for.

As with most myths, the Diancecht myth has many meanings, there may be some I have missed. The number of herbs relates to the number of days in the year and there must be some relation to the number of times Diancecht struck Miach and to how long it took Nuada's hand to regenerate. How do these relations add to the myth?

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*Last modified: August 19 2018 15:00:02*